

Message Text

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ACTION IO-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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P R 241057Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3545

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1934

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, SY, XF

SUBJ: SYRIAN UNDOF EXTENSION

1. SUMMARY: SARG HAS GIVEN NO PUBLIC EXPLANATION OF ITS
DECISION TO RENEW UNDOF. SOVIETS WERE APPARENT-
LY ONLY ONES TO HAVE ADVANCE NOTICE OF DECISION AND MAY HAVE
PLAYED MAJOR BACKSTAGE ROLE IN CONVINCING ASAD TO GRANT
FULL SIX MONTHS EXTENSION. SYRIAN PREOCCUPATIONS WITH IRAQ,
LACK OF SYRIAN MILITARY READINESS, UNCERTAINTY OVER EGYPTIAN
INTENTIONS, DISILLUSIONMENT OVER VIENNA CONFERENCE, DOUBTS
RE PROSPECTS OF POSITIVE RESULTS FOR SYRIA AT SALZBURG,
INDICATIONS THAT GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD NOT CONVENE UNTIL
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LATE SUMMER AT EARLIEST MAY ALL HAVE

CONTRIBUTED TO EXTENSION DECISION. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN OBSERVERS AND HIGHLY PLACED SYRIANS ALIKE HAVE JOINED GUESSING GAME SINCE SYRIA ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION RENEW UNDOF MANDATE FOR FURTHER SIX MONTHS ON MAY 21. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM HERE BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS THAT SYRIA WOULD RENEW, BUT ONLY FOR TWO MONTHS. EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS HAVE HAD FIELD DAY LECTURING ON LOGIC BEHIND SYRIAN DECISION BUT NONE HAVE ADDUCED ANY FACTS ON WHICH TO BASE THEIR ELEGANTLY ELABORATED THEORIES. PRESIDENTIAL POLITICAL ADVISOR DAOUDI SIDESTEPED MY OWN QUESTIONS MAY 23 WITH ANSWER THAT HE AND I WOULD BOTH HAVE TO ASK ASAD ABOUT THE BACKGROUND OF "THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION."

3. SYRIAN MEDIA DELAYED ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SARG HAD REQUESTED UNDOF EXTENSION UNTIL AFTERNOON EWS BROADCAST OF MAY 22. PRESS FOLLOWING DAY PLACED ITEM INCONSPICUOUSLY.

4. RUMANIAN AMBASSADOR INFORMS ME THAT OUR SOVIET COLLEAGUE MOUKHITDINOV WAS SUMMONED FOR MEETING WITH ASAD EVENING OF TUESDAY MAY 20 TO BE INFORMED OF SARG'S DECISION. ASSUMING RUMANIAN WAS RECOUNTING HARD FACT, THEN MOSCOW WAS FIRST CAPITAL OFFICIALLY TO RECEIVE NEWS, SOME 24 HOURS BEFORE SYG AND USUN HEARD FROM THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR (USUN 1677). WE PRESUME THIS INDICATES SOVIET-SYRIAN DISCUSSIONS OF THIS ISSUE DURING RECENT WEEKS IN WHICH SOVIETS RECOMMENDED EXTENSION.

5. BESIDES SUCH PRESUMPTIVE SOVIET COUNSEL, CONTRIBUTING TO ASAD'S DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH CURRENT DISPUTE WITH IRAQ WHICH HAD DETERIORATED TO POINT WHERE IN EYES SYRIAN LEADERSHIP MILITARY CONFRONTATION COULD NOT BE RULED OUT. BOTH COUNTRIES HAD TRANSFERRED MILITARY UNITS NEARER BORDER. EXTENSION UNDOF MAY HAVE BEEN SEEN AS WAY OF KEEPING GOLAN FRONT TRANQUIL PENDING ABATEMENT OF CRISIS WITH IRAQ.

6. SYRIA'S OWN LACK OF MILITARY READINESS COULD ALSO HAVE PLAYED PART IN ITS DECISION. WITH DELIVERY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT CONTINUING AND TRAINING OF UNITS NOW IN COURSE, CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY LEADERS MAY WELL HAVE COUNSELED ASAD IN FAVOR OF EXTENSION. ON PURELY MILITARY GROUNDS, THEY WOULD, WE BELIEVE, PREFER ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL IN WINTER RATHER THAN SUMMER IN ANY CASE.

7. SYRIAN RESENTMENT OF RECENT EGYPTIAN HIGHHANDEDNESS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN FACTOR. SADAT'S ASSUMPTION THAT HE COULD GO TO SALZBURG SPEAKING FOR ALL ARABS COULD HAVE DECIDED

SYRIANS TO SHOW INDEPENDENCE BY GESTURE OF THEIR OWN
OBVIOUSLY NOT TIED TO SADAT'S MAY 17-18 VISIT TO DAMASCUS
OR HIS OVERALL MISSION. DESPITE IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN SADAT AND ASAD SINCE RIYADH MEETING, SYRIA NOT CON-
VINCED THAT ITS POSITIONS AND OBJECTIVES COINCIDE COMPLETELY
WITH EGYPT'S.

8. SYRIAN ANALYSIS, WHETHER OR NOT SUPPORTED BY SOVIET
INPUT, THAT RESULTS OF KISSINGER-GROMYKO MEETING IN
VIENNA WERE MEAGER FROM SYRIA'S STANDPOINT, THAT ITS
PROSPECTS AT SALZBURG SUMMIT ARE LIMITED, AND THAT ALL
CONCERNED NEED MORE TIME TO PREPARE FOR GENEVA MAY ALL HAVE
CONTRIBUTED TO DECISION.

9. FINALLY, ALL OF FOREGOING SPECULATION NOTWITHSTANDING,
WE MUST GRANT THAT SYRIA BY AGREEING TO RENEW UNDOF FOR
FURTHER SIX MONTHS HAS REASSERTED ITS DESIRE FOR
NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SOLUTION TO MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT.
MURPHY

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